

The status of the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea in relation with Iran and Russia from Naser al-Din Shah to the Treaty of Akhal (1847-1881 AD)

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Abstract

Foreign relations during the Qajar dynasty along the borders, especially with Russia and England, played an effective role in forming and orienting many events during this era. One of the most important borders of Iran is the Caspian Sea and its surrounding area. The Caspian Sea is the world's largest inland lake. Its climatic, geographical, and geological conditions make surrounding lands, including its eastern shores, very special. This has played an important role in creating the historical events in the region. The eastern regions of the Caspian Sea, the motherland of Turkmens, especially during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah, became very important for Russians. Thus, to achieve their own colonial desire and fulfill the testament of Peter the Great, they carried out military operations and spent considerable cost to enter Iran again. This incident left profound effects on the region. From a geo-historical viewpoint and adopting a descriptive-analytical method, this article examines the climatic characteristics and position of the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea. Then, it investigates the status of the previously mentioned regions in relations between Iran and Russia, in the era of Naser al-Din Shah. In addition, it deliberates the Russian colonial attempts to achieve their intent and Iranian reactions against them.

Keywords: historical geography, the Caspian Sea, Turkmens, the era of Naser al-Din Shah, Iran, Russia.

Introduction

Historical geography, studying the past events by using geographical factors, is an interdisciplinary field that plays a remarkable role in analyzing the history of every nation. Since Iran is not an exception, we can analyze its history. In fact, it would be far more effective about those regions whose residents are so limited due to its climatic and geographical position. Geographical factors play an important role in the occurrence of historical events. Climate is one of the most important geographical factors which play a decisive role in determining life conditions.

Regarding the effective geopolitical position, climatic characteristics and geographical position over their longstanding history, the surrounding lands of the Caspian Sea have been always in the spotlight of various ethnic groups. One of the most important parts of these lands is the eastern shore which was very determinant in the reign of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (1847-1895 AD). Because this region during that period was at the center of a series of very effective and important incidents concerning the history and culture of Iran, consequences have been apparent up to now. These consequences consist of Tsarist Russia's onrush to this area to realize its continuous domination on Russians' attempts to make fundamental changes such as changing lifestyle, separating a large part of Iranian territory and so on. During that period, the colonists, especially Russia and Britain, were interested in Iran as a feeble and subdued country. To achieve their ambitions, they invaded the Persian borders. These invasions, especially by Russians, are famous. In

these vast areas, Russians were interested in some key points, especially in Turkmen zone, at the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea, which has a very important status in studying Iranian foreign relations in the era of Naser al-Din Shah. It seems that focusing on these relations is necessary to analyzing frontier events and status of Iran in colonial competitions between colonists.

Thus far, scholars have written so many books, articles, and conducted various studies on Qajar relations with Tsarist Russia, Russia's attempt to exploit its neighbors, and about the border areas and their relationship with central governments of Iran. However, scholars have not yet conducted a study to independently analyze the role of geography and environment in the process of shaping events in the eastern part of the Caspian Sea. That is where, especially in the era of Naser al-Din Shah, Tsarist Russia was so interested in. Of course, it should be mentioned that Iranian and non-Iranian itineraries contain a lot of information about this. The original inhabitants of the eastern lands of the Caspian were Turkmen. Although there are a number of studies about Turkmen's history, there is no research to describe geographical features of their zone and analyze effects of previously mentioned features on Turkmen's fate and historical events.

By adopting a descriptive-analytical method and from a geo-historical viewpoint, this paper studies climate and geographical features of eastern land of the Caspian Sea and its effects on lifestyle of Turkmen. It tries to answer some questions including: which geographical and climatic features did these specific lands have in the era of Naser al-Din Shah? Why was Tsarist Russia interested in these barren deserts?

1. Geographical borders of the eastern region of the Caspian Sea and its features

Geography was always an important factor in shaping historical incidents. In this regard, historical geography studies the effects of geographical factors and phenomena, especially natural geography, in shaping historical incidents.¹ Historical incidents do not happen with no regard to their geographical context. We should have no doubt in entire dependence of these two fields on human knowledge.² Geographical context of the eastern lands of the Caspian Sea has paved the way for so many incidents in the era of Qajar. By the phrase of eastern lands of the Caspian Sea, we mean a vast linear domain from Gvryf Gulf at the northeast of the Caspian Sea, to the southeast of the Sea, that is Gorgan and Astarabad, which today consist of certain parts of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Russia and Iran. The eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, located at the west of Tūrān, extends for about 1,000 km from the outfall of Ural River to Astarabad. The northern part is shallow, but there are some harbors near the Castle Alexanderosky. From there, southward, to Balkan, there exist rocky shores; after that, to Astarabad, the coasts are gritty. The most important bays in eastern coasts are Kinderlyn, Kyzyl-Su and Balkan. (Kostenkov, 2003: 278)

We, in this study, do not analyze the fertile field of Amu Darya and Syr Darya and the verdurous regions of the Central Asia. We rather focus on the west of the Central Asia, usually called the Western Deserts, which is the focus of population, that is from the outfall of Atrak River to Kara-Bogaz and Hossein-Qoli Bays and the Krasnovedesk Peninsula (Iranian Foreign Ministry archives, 1993: 23; 31) In this coastline, from north to south, there exist several channels and bays, including Kara-Bogaz, Krasnovedesk (Qhara-Su) and so on. From the outfall of Atrak River to the north, the Caspian Sea connects to the scorching deserts such as the Karakum (the black sand) whose lowlands are uninhabited. Since the east of the Caspian Sea is in an arid climate, no river

¹Lombard, Maurice. 1391. Historical Geography of the Islamic world in the first four centuries, Abdollah Nasseri Taheri & S. Sadat Tabatabaei. Tehran: Research Center for Islamic History.

²Gordon, W. 2013. In the context of the history of geography, Translator to Persian Hossein Hataminejad & HamidReza Peyghambari, Tehran: Research Center for Islamic History.

flows into the Caspian Sea from the east (Mousavi Rohbakhsh, 2008: 19-30). In this vast area, at least until Russians rushed in, there have been a few verdurous spots. In fact, after Russians' invasion, some more cities, harbors and facilities have been founded, which we do not study. Although there were multiple bays on this coastline, it does not mean that this region was rich, valuable and important. A large part of these areas, due to its climate, weather and environmental conditions, was uninhabited. The eastern side of the Caspian Sea is regarded as a low rainfall and arid zones of the world. Pashino, the Former Deputy of Russian Embassy in Tehran, while Russia was rushing to the East, was assigned to go to Tashkent on behalf of the Russian Foreign Ministry. Although he did not allude to the southern areas, he wrote about weather and conditions of the carriage path between Orenburg to Tashkent as follows:

The advisers told me that resorts on the way are very sloppy and, because of excessive cold winter, many camels have been died this year. ... In last week, the temperature dropped to forty below zero. ...there is no firewood to save you from the cold and no food to eat. ... The foodstuffs are not various; charcoal and firewood, that are the needful facilities, cannot be found either. On the track ahead, there might be no water in an area amounts to 2500 square meters ... (Pashino, 1993: 33-34). On his way, he confirms the claims of these advisers, according to his own words, that there are no villages and towns along the way. Except themselves, there exists no animal in these deserts, e.g. in the Karakum Desert, nor a human (ibid: 41 & 46). Coinciding with Russia's expansionist proceedings, Capitan Kostenko was also one of the Russian officers and explorers who traveled to the eastern parts of the Caspian Sea. He wrote an itinerary full of information about geography and climate of these zones. He reported that there are several paths between the Caspian Sea and the Ural, also known as a very low land which Iranians called "Tūrān". All these vast areas are similar to vast dry lands. They have the same mode, that is, poor and unfavorable. There are very few lawn and verdure nor villages and settlements. According to the old tales, here was the location of the Devil. (Kostenkov, 2004: 40). These vast dry lands represent unfavorable and tough climate. According to these reports, we can understand the environmental poverty of the eastern lands of the Caspian Sea. Vámbéry writes: The common problems of Turkmens are pasture, water and agricultural land, but the most vital one is the water ... Drinking water in there [i.e. the eastern lands of the Caspian Sea] is too scarce so that, in our convoy, try to thief someone's waterskin means try to kill him; and demand for water from others is tantamount to foolishness. ... The day's temperature is too high in such a manner that the earth, to a depth of a half foot, is so hot that can burns the feet. Here, even the most ferocious inhabitants, who look askance at footwear, have to wear a piece of leather ... (Vámbéry, 1984: 143-49).

This report not only reflects the climate of eastern lands of the Caspian Sea, but also reflects the lack of such biological diversity and richness of life, which exists on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea. In this case, Melkonov says that from the southern side of Bogaz, Kyzyl-Su and Balkan (the northeast of the Caspian Sea) to the frontier of Astarabad, plants and vegetation are very sparse and earth is salt marsh. Although in somewhere there exist farms, the weather is bad and pernicious ... About Kara-Su (Krasnovodesk) to Kara-Bogaz, there exists no water well that could be the sign of life. In fact, there is only a vast desert (Melkonov, 1984: 200). These inappropriate environmental characteristics and climate, as we said before, have played a major role in shaping the lifestyle of inhabitants of the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea, especially Turkmen.

In addition to military weakness and mismanagement, the problem of bad weather and poor climate was definitely one of the reasons that why Qajars neglect the eastern lands of the Caspian Sea. Of course, Qajars regarded these lands as their own properties and a part of the Kingdom of Persia, and they frequently dispatched troops to achieve and have control over there. However, we should note that this domination was temporary and these lands have been always a less important

zone. If they had an appropriate and temperate climate, such as the southern lands of the Caspian Sea, perhaps, they could be more attractive to Qajars. Nevertheless, the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea were the origins of many occurrences in the history of Iran. As we said before, in every region, the proper climate is the main condition to create an advanced civilization (East, 2013: 63). According to above reports, we know that the eastern lands of the Caspian Sea to the banks of Amu Darya and Syr Darya, due to their natural and geographical circumstances, did not have a suitable social, cultural and economic status. Therefore, these regions did not have a history full of vicissitudes. Nonetheless, in the Qajar's era, Russians rushed to these regions and paved the way to change them. Although they had a variety of reasons to do so, their main reason was to prevent Britain's possible penetration for domination over previously mentioned regions.

2. The political, economic and social circumstances of the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea

Since these regions had particular climatic circumstances, hence, particular life circumstances, in harmony with the climatic ones, have formed there. Climate, soil and terrain are the most important natural factors that determine the ways of life in any location. Natural features of each region result from the climate of the region, form a certain kind of life. According to these features, humankind gradually has created (and developed) the means of livelihood and economic activities (East, Ibid: 64-65). At the eastern side of the Caspian Sea, thus, the lifestyle and people's circumstances are the results of climatic circumstances of these regions. Climate impact on human life is far more than other geographical factors. Not only does the survival of plants and animals, which humankind needs for his own subsistence, depend on the climate, but the human health also closely relates to the climate (Ganji, 1965: 27). The main inhabitants of a large part of the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea were Turkmen, who were famous for plundering. Turkmen of the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea were accustomed to burglary, moral corruption, slavery, kidnap, and murder and looting (Vámbéry, Ibid: 67-98). This lifestyle, in the first place, is influenced by the climate of these regions; otherwise, in those lands whose environmental capabilities can be profitably actualized, a nomad does not need to go miles away from his home to find something can save his family from starvation. In this regard, Moser says: It is not possible to go directly from Khyvq to Ashgabat, since you have to cross a dangerous desert. The Tekke and Merv regions are not safe due to overrun of Turkmens (Moser, 1997: 175; 188).

In many of these regions, life was not possible since there was no water. In such a land, sheep rearing made no sense. Scorching heat of sun withers very little amount of grass which grows there. There is only an arid and scathing land exists here (Maatoufi, 2004: 2/1549-1950). These Non-cultivable lands were the home of Turkmen people. These people, over the centuries, were accustomed to living in these empty and arid lands as nomad. The nomadic lifestyle was the result of dry weather and poverty of soil. Here, unlike the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, there is no diversity of plant and animal life. In this regard, man has been always subdued by the nature. His lifestyle has been always determined by the climate and circumstances of the region where he lives. There was no alternative for him; he, over the time, was accustomed to this state. Due to environmental effects, a large variety of Turkmen tribes were scattered all over these vast deserts at the east side of the Caspian Sea. Goklans and Yomut are the most important Turkmen tribes; the latter was rather at the eastern shores (Bigdeli, 1990: 292). Hedayat writes:

These tribes live as nomad. They have long-standing disagreements and are far from civil society. They have no city where can settle. They, like bedouins, are scattered in a vast desert where there is no angel or demon, nor wild or fairy (Hedayat, 2006: 47-46). At Qajar era, Turkmen's lifestyle have boosted their centrifugal spirit. To survive, they constantly invaded the Khorasan

province. These invasions continued throughout the Qajar's era. There existed not even a day that several villages on the outskirts of Astarabad have not been plundered (Khanikev, 1996: 93). Due to these lootings, Qajars decided to eradicate Turkmen. Therefore, an equipped troop was sent to invade Merv. However, Turkmens won the war, and after that, they extended their domain of invasion (Sykes, 1985: 18). Turkmen's lifestyle seriously affected the history and incidents of this era. These incidents consisted of too many wars between them and the rulers of the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea, Russia's invasions and their taking advantage of these lands as a bridge. However, when Britain reacted to these invasions, Russians' pretext was lack of civilization and insecurity in previously mentioned regions) and so on. Obe (Turkmen Tent), which was under supervision of Turkmens' elders, separately and independently governed Turkmens' lands (Frazer, 1985: 463). That played an important role in shaping the events and future history of these lands.

3. Russia's interest to the eastern region of the Caspian Sea in the era of Naser al-Din Shah

Our goal, here, is not studying Russia's conquests and explaining their attack on the east side of the Caspian Sea and the Middle East. So far, too many books and papers have been written about this. Although the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea has an unfavorable geography and dry climate, Russians were so interested in them that, by spending remarkable costs and numerous campaign, sought to confiscate these lands. They were to do so, in order to save those regions from potential dominance of their rival, Britain. After their initial successful onrush to Iranian territory in the era of Fath-Ali-Shah, which resulted in two treaties of Gulistan and Turkmenchay, Russians prepared themselves to take a new step in the way of territorial expansion, but this time in the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea. At that time, the colonial competitions began. Once, one of the colonists got a privilege, the others involved in another competition to get a new one (Mahmyd, 1982: 158). Of course, the arrangements were also provided. Since, according to the Treaty of Turkmenchay, Iran's government gifted the privilege of navigation in the Caspian Sea to Russia. (Sepehr, 1958: 1/336) Actually, these onrushes were Russian's another step to realize the fictitious or real testament of Peter the Great i.e. to reach warm and high seas. (Bartold, 1996: 149; Kattam, 1992: 193-194).

After Turkmenchay, due to other treaties between Iran and European countries, Russia had more fear. Therefore, to prevent Iran's alliance with other countries, Russians focused their attention on the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea. While Russia had the privilege of navy in the Caspian Sea, Mohammad-Shah (1887 AD) appealed to them. They used this demand as their pretext and settled on Hossein-Qoli and Ashoradeh islands (Kurzon, 2003: 252-254). Although Iran's government protested to their settlement, they remained on those islands. Therefore, before Naser al-Din Shah, Russia entered some regions including Astarabad, Ashouradeh, Cheleken peninsula at the south of Krasnovodesk (Iranian Foreign Ministry archives, Ibid: Documents No: 16; 17; 24). However, it was in the era of Naser al-Din Shah that Russians seriously resumed their military invasion into arid and parched regions at the east side of the Caspian Sea. Russians had already established business relationship with the East; that means, commercial interests preceded their military invasion. After Paris Peace Treaty, Khanikev, the Russian representative in Herat, asked the court of Iran to allow Russians to have a consulate in this city (Ettehadiieh, 1976: 201-205). Nevertheless, there are many obstacles in front of them; for example, the area was a desert with no oasis, where there is often a risk of being looted by Turkmens (Kostenkov, Ibid: 278), which all were due to geographical circumstances of the east side of the Caspian Sea. The other Russians' commercial obstacles consisted of peoples' unwilling to trade (they considered trade unworthy), importing the goods that were not so sellable, religious restrictions and Muftis' fatwa that one should stay away from Islamic prohibitions (such as wearing gold, silver and silk cloths) in order to

be forgiven. The other sentence of Sharia, which prevents trade, is to compel merchants to pay Zakat (Pashino, Ibid: 259-261). Moreover, if a merchandise got to the east, it would not be immune from Turkmen's plundering. Until the establishment of Trans-Caspian railway in 1885, business in these lands was not thriving. After that, by establishing commercial business, trade flourished. Although trade was insignificant, it directly correlated to Tsar's imperial policy.

That provided a good reason to put more pressure on Iran's government (Entner, 1990: 21-30). However, Russia's pretext was provided by Turkmen whose plundering threatened Russians' commercial convoys. In 1906 AD, according to a decree by Tsar, they banned importation of any goods from other countries. We should note that the commercial centers at the eastern side of the Caspian Sea were rather in the cities placed beside the Amu Darya and Syr Darya (such as Tashkent, Khiva, Bukhara and so on); the eastern shores themselves did not have any thriving commercial region (Kostenkov, Ibid: 256-270). These regions were important for Russians because their commercial convoys had to pass through these lands. Russians, then, regarded the security and control over those regions as their own task. That was one of the main reasons for Russians' onrushes. Until the Herat War and The Paris Peace Treaty (1857 AD), the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea did not play so important a role in relationship between Iran and Russia. After that, competition between colonists intensified and Russia's onrushes to the east began. This peace was a kind of reaction from Britain to Russia was recently defeated in the Crimean War (Terenzio, 1980: 51). On the other hand, Russians did not want to ignore expanding the scope of their colonies. By achieving new colonies, they were looking for an opportunity to compensate for the humiliation that the Berlin Congress caused.³ Therefore, international circumstances, that is, lack of success in the west and their attempt to compensate, explain why Russians turned their attention to the east.

We should mention that, while Russian military was onrushing to the east, they were always preparing diplomatic context by consuls, ambassadors and ministers (Takmil Homayoun, 2001: 55). In late 1864 AD, according to the order of Tsar, Russians held a conference to make a decision about how they can get control over the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea. They agreed that, at first, Russia's army occupies Kyzyl-Su; then it turns to a base from where they can monitor the Caspian Sea and its shores as well. Moreover, they agreed to set up their base farther away from Ashuradah where Iran claimed its ownership, in order to divest Iran's government of his excuse. However, the problems of Khanates prevented the immediate implementation of this decision (Kazem Zadeh, 1975: 10). Their onrushes were not completely planned. At first, they occupied Haji-Tarkhan State at the north of the Caspian Sea, Semipalatinsk at the eastern end of the Irtysh River, Orenburg that overlooks the Ural River, krasnovodeskt beside the Caspian Sea (Terenzio, Ibid: 58). When Russia confronted these vast regions, instead of focusing on lands around the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea, they initially focused on ones farther east than these lands (where, later, they were known as Turkestan and the Central Asia). They did not have any concern about the east and were freer to continue their onrush. In early 1865 AD, General M. G. Cherniaev insisted that it be not possible for Russians to maintain their position in the Central Asia if they do not besiege Tashkent (Dvankzeh, 1997: 186-187).

In a political viewpoint, Russians approached India and put more pressure on Britain, but from an economic view of point, they got a larger consumer market, more staples and opened the

³ In 1878, this Treaty signed between Russia, France, Britain, Austria and the Ottoman Empire to revise Saint Stephano peace treaty (between Russia and the Ottoman Empire). Although this treaty weakened Russians' prestige and influence in Europe and prevented them to onrush to the west, it did not prevent them to compete against Britain. This treaty provoked them to rush to the east, in order to achieve their own colonist goals.

gate to the Southern Asia. The Akhal Treaty, which we have been told that Naser al-Din Shah reluctantly accepted, legally changed that part of Iran's territory, i.e. from the northern borders of Khorasan to the Tejan River, to Russia's territory. To Russians, if they occupied Merv and Akhal, Iran would be safe from being looted by Tekkeh, Merv and Akhal's Turkmen. When they occupied the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea, they used it as a base to rush to lands where were farther eastern, such as Afghanistan and India. After occupying the Turkmen village of Krasnovodesk, an army under the command of Lomackin rushed from Kinderlyn port to Khivah (Zamani, 2005: 132).

Contrary to their initial claim that they came to these regions for peace, Russians rushed to occupy there and they now did not go out. They tended to satisfy both Turkmen and Iranians; thus, it seems that their initial aim was not aiding Iran to subdue Turkmen (MacKenzie, 1980: 142-143). Since the beginning of the era of Naser al-Din Shah up to the late 19th century, after enduring a lot of difficulties and performing some military operations under the command of Lomakyn, Lazarev, Skbelve, whose details have been documented in Kazemzadeh's book (relationships between Iran and Russia), Russians could finally occupy a vast part of Iran's territory. By Akhal Treaty (1881 AD), they separated these vast regions from motherland and legally annex them to Tsar's territory. According to this Treaty, although the Atrak River, with a length of 186 km, flows into the Hossein-Qoli Gulf, it was specified as the border between Iran and Russia (MohammadHosseini, 2012: 582). In addition to Akhal, Russians were still attempting to expand their territory. They, according to the Treaty of 1988AD, gained some privileges. Under the second article of this Treaty, not only the privilege of navigation in the Caspian Sea, but also the privilege of navigation in all rivers flowing into the Caspian Sea were assigned to Russia (Teymuri, 1956: 90). Up to the end of the era of Naser al-Din Shah, for example, on Jumada al-Ula 1885 AD. and Dhul Qadah 1892AD, other protocols have been signed specifying the borders (Iranian Foreign Ministry archives, Ibid: Documents No: 80; 81; 82). To expand their territory, Russians did whatever they were able to do; for example, they shunted the Atrek River into inner regions of Iran, converted the land into marsh, then added it to their own territory (Jahanbani, 1957: 24). All these, therefore, showed that they took advantage of various methods to expand their domination.

4. Iran's reaction to Russia's onrushes to the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea

Russia's onrushes to the eastern regions made Iran to react, however, contrary to the era of Fath-Ali-Shah, Iran abstained from military reaction. Since a long time ago, these regions were regarded as Iran's territory and their rulers paid tribute and taxes to Iran's court. Due to Iran's defeat against Russia at the era of Qajar, Turkmen, who were the original inhabitants of these lands, refused to obey from Iran's court. This intensified their centrifugal spirit. At that time, since Iran's government was under the domination of colonists, its attacks on Turkmen had no suitable political, military and diplomatic patronage. Even though Iran won in some cases, it was the main loser, because Turkmen, who had nothing to lose, battled as guerrillas, that is, rushed suddenly and then ran away to mountains. Due to loss of a fixed army in those lands, once Iran's army returned, Turkmens came back. Thus, before Russians' attendance, inhabitants of these lands demonstrated their spirit of independence and refused to obey from Qajar's court. One of the main defeats of Qajar's army in war against Turkmens was the battle of Merv (1859AD.) which not only weakened Iran against these rebels but also opened the gate to Russia. After that, the Iran's government did nothing serious to rehabilitate and re-occupy these areas (Mahcavi, 1970: 161). The separation of Khorasan and Herat made Turkmen's bolder (Ramazani, 1386: 185). In the era of Naser al-Din Shah, coinciding with Russia's focus on these regions, Qajar's court tried to take back to Iran's ascendancy over these lands by means of military operation and diplomatic negotiations. However, Qajar's attempts did not end in desired result (Mirniya, 1988: 302). The main reasons of Qajar's

failure consisted of inconsistency among Iran's army leaders and Turkmen's guerrilla attacks. Due to these facts, Iran's government now was infirm and asked Russia to suppress these nomadic peoples (Korzon, Ibid: 17). Russia used this as his pretext to onrush to these regions. Of course, Iran's court optimistically expected that Russia, after suppression of Turkmen, would give back these regions. After Russia's onrush to the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea and occupying a part of Iran's territory, Qajars did nothing serious and merely limited themselves to negotiation to specify the borders (Translator, Ibid: 83). That was because they knew that a country with such an infirm army could not object to Russia. For example, when Russians, in Astarabad, compelled Turkmen to pay tribute, Iran's foreign minister objected to Russia's chargé d'affaires Barthelme and were called to cease this behavior (Qaziha, 2001: Document No 44: pp 113-114). Nevertheless, after Russia rushed to these regions and caught the control over them, to prevent their further progress, Qajars demanded peace and allowed Russia to separate and seize some parts of Iran's territory. After Treaty of Akhal, Russians rushed to the east and occupied Merv and Serakhs. In a letter, the Chief Minister informed Naser al-Din Shah. He knew that it was too late and these lands now belonged to Russia (Ibid, Document No: 76: pp 185-186). According to these facts, Qajars noticed their own weakness and did not intend to enter a war against Russia to take back these vast and barren lands in the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea.

Over these years, people like Amir Kabir, Sipah Salar and even the King (Naser al-Din Shah), could not accept the separation of these vast barren regions at Iran's borders. They, in their own turns, offered some preventive plans. Amir Kabir paid more attention to defenses of Astarabad, appointed Mirza Ismaeil, who is a qualified person, as its ruler so that Turkmen could not plunder, nor would the Russia's Consul have any pretext to interfere. He, thus, let peace return to the region (Adammiyat, 2006: 477-478). At the beginning of the era of Naser al-Din Shah, while Russians' occasional onrushes to the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea made there unstable, Amir Kabir sent Reza-Qoli Khan Hedayat, as an ambassador, to inform him about the circumstances of Iran's provinces at Transoxiana. He wrote down what was happening there. With the murder of Amir Kabir, this plan failed. When Avdvnnan, the reporter of Daily News, came to Sipah Salar in order to allow him to go freely to Akhal, he replied that there existed several regions at south east of the Caspian Sea that Iran and Russia still have some disagreements about. Therefore, although the interior areas of Iran would be safe for him, the government cannot guarantee his life in Akhal. However, Iranian officials do not satisfy about Russians' interferes with ruling these lands; they have no fear about it (Saadat nouri, 1958: 517) Once, Sipah Salar could gather Turkmen's leaders, but while everything was prepared to reach an agreement, Russians retreated (Shamim, 1966: 235). Russia did not endure any agreement between Iran and Turkmen.

When Iran's government knew that Russia rushed to the previously mentioned regions, it noticed Russian Chief Minister in Tehran that these onrushes caused concern for Iran; they should not attack with no permission to the land, which have been always a part of Iran. Russians insisted that Turkmen be citizenships of nowhere, but Naser al-Din Shah, in a letter, warned them that these regions had always belonged to Iran and Russia would not be allowed to build any castle there. Despite to this fact that Iran's government, compared to Russia's, did not have enough military power, it was not completely passive. Qajars tried so much to prevent Russians to gain a pretext; however, due to various reasons, they failed. The bitter experience of separation of a vast part of Iran's territory during the Fath-Ali-Shah era caused the officials to feel fear that lest they be defeated again to Russia. Therefore, they did not intend to involve themselves in a military response. On the contrary, they tried to solve the problem by a diplomatic policy. Nevertheless, they failed. Russia remained in Iran's territory until the First World War.

The consequences of Russia's onrush to the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea

Russia's onrush to the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea and the Central Asia had so many consequences and, to some extent, changed the life of their inhabitants. The first consequence was that these regions became important. It has been a long time since these lands have drawn colonists' attention, especially Russia and Britain. After Russia's onrush and occupying these regions, another part of Iran was separated; as Bayany says, by Treaty of Akhal, Russia legally caught control over these lands and Iran forced to withdrawal (Bayany, 1996: 115). Iran's current map is the consequence of these very incidents. After the Treaty of Akhal, Russians still were proceeding with their onrushes. They occupied cities including Merv and Serakhs since Russia's industries were dependent on the goods brought from the east. On January 1894 AD, Russians founded the trans-Caspian state, where its center was Ashgabat, to control the occupied regions more properly. One of the consequences of this establishment was the establishment of security and stability and expansion of commerce. The other consequences of Russia's onrush to these regions consisted of promoting education and sedentary lifestyle, disturbing the social relations of Turkmen, establishing the factories and utilizing Russian technicians, employing Turkmen in new vocations and so on (Maatoufi, Ibid: 55).

It covered their imperialistic proceedings that Russians put forward the problem of savage inhabitants of these regions, especially Turkmen. Nevertheless, their onrush had many consequences on the nomads who live in this improper geographical situation. Kostenkov's book, Description of Central Asia, describes how Russians' attempted to do so. To rush to Turkestan and occupy lands around Amu Darya and Syr Darya, they had no choice but occupy Turkmen's deserts and civilize them. Despite the bad effects, Russia's imperialistic proceedings had some good influences on these people. The natives developed their own trade and industry in such a manner that they could compete against Russians' merchants. Although these peoples forced to plunder for gaining the necessities of life, after Russia's onrush, they could easily earn their livelihood. These new citizens of Russia accepted European lifestyle and started to imitate them in everything including type of food, housing and clothing. To do so, Russians' emigrants spent a lot of money there (Kostenkov, Ibid: 395-399). Due to Russia's onrush, various groups of Russians immigrated to these regions and that played an important role to prevent the inhabitants of these regions to Russian ones.

In addition to Iran, Britain reacted to Russia's onrush to the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea and the Central Asia, as well. Of course, it was just because of India. British officials feared that if Russia insists on such onrush, it would probably mean that they are to attack Afghanistan. To them, attacking Afghanistan means paving the way to attack India. That was not bearable for Britain. Therefore, to prevent Russia, they provoked and threatened Iran to enter a war against Russia. Nevertheless, Naser al-Din Shah replied that if, from the outset, you (i.e. the Britain's Government) officially and severely have prevented Russia to rush to Akhal and Turkmen's, they were not able to do so. When you, as a strong government, cannot stop them, we, a fortiori, cannot either. If we did not make our peace with them, they would occupy Khorasan (Teymury, Ibid: 16). This showed Qajar's confession to their own weakness against Russia and Britain's underdo in cooperation with Iran concerning the matter in hand.

Conclusion

Geography is the context of so many historical incidents. Then it, as an aid, can help us to study historical incidents. One of the most important fields in science of geography is the discussion about climate. This factor affects people's lifestyle (features like people's mentality, their livelihood or even the kind of government), so it can help us to study all events occurring in a certain region. Therefore, geography is important for historians, archaeologists and geologists, as much as it would

be for geographers. If we are to study the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea (from the Sea to Amu Darya), in the era of Naser al-Din Shah, especially when Russia focused on them, we should note that these lands are not exception. Dry climate and unfavorable geographical circumstances (i.e. vast plane scorching deserts with low environmental diversity) in the eastern regions of the Caspian Sea, have affected their inhabitants who were mostly Turkmen. These lands were not very important to Qajars. Due to these, their inhabitants had a completely traditional nomadic life based on murdering and plundering. Due to colonial competitions between Russia and Britain in the era of Naser al-Din Shah, Russia focused on these lands. By spending a lot of costs and various military operations, they could occupy these lands and, by Treaty of Akhal, legally seized them to Russia's territory. Therefore, in order to achieve their own political aims (e.g. competition with Britain to get closer to Afghanistan and India) and economic goals (e.g. get to a larger consumer market, more staples), they were to accept the risk of rushing to these barren deserts. Their onrush made many changes in previously mentioned regions, such as Thriving means of communication, improving health circumstances, promoting sedentary, commerce and education, establishing factories, relocation of population. All of these can be called Russianization.

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